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# OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS AND CERTAIN PHASES OF EDUCATIONAL WORK IN GERMANY. II

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GEORGE KOEPPPEL

Principal Twenty-first Street School, Milwaukee, Wis.

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## SPECIAL HELP SCHOOLS

*Hilfsschulen.*—The establishment of special help classes for children whose progress in school is retarded and the *organization of such classes into schools* has made great progress in all parts of Germany, and large and small cities, even villages, conduct such schools.

I am at present not referring to institutions for the feeble-minded where children of lower types of mental weakness are educated to a certain degree of usefulness, but to schools that are established for pupils who are unable to do the regular work required in the courses of the elementary schools in the usual time, and who occupy a place intermediate between the so-called normal pupils and those who are properly placed in institutions for the feeble-minded or idiotic.

Most of the pupils of the *Hilfsschulen* are congenitally weak in intelligence, while in many others faulty development, sickness, or unfavorable surroundings are either the cause of their backwardness or reinforce their innate weakness. Feeble-mindedness is a relative term. We know well enough that in classes of so-called normal children there is no approach to evenness of mentality and that in such classes we have to deal with children who, from the most intelligent member down to the dullest, represent many degrees of congenital endowment, and that not a few of them are *comparatively* feeble-minded. That the latter class is unable to follow the instruction devised for pupils of higher powers is evident; they will not profit by it themselves and moreover become a burden to the class.

Similar considerations led in Milwaukee to a great deal of agitation in favor of ungraded classes and to their establishment. In other American cities, various other arrangements are used experimentally in consideration of the inequality of the natural ability of pupils, in order that at least the two great classes of normal pupils and backward pupils may each have a better chance of progress.

In Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, the movement of caring for these weaker pupils has taken large proportions, and many of the foremost educators, school physicians, and medical specialists are intensely interested in furthering it. Every other year a convention is held where prominent delegates from all parts of the empire and from neighboring countries discuss conditions and means of progress in this particular field. I attended a similar congress, held July 5 and 6 in Altdorf, Switzerland, where an exhaustive report on the *Hilfsschulen* of Switzerland was made and various problems pertaining to mentally and morally backward pupils were discussed by able educators and alienists. The earnestness and ability of these men and their devotion to a difficult and somewhat uninviting phase of work were highly inspiring.

Wherever I investigated these schools for backward children, in Berlin, Charlottenburg, Wittenau, Lübeck, Hamburg, Leipzig, Chemnitz, Dresden, Zürich, I found my opinion confirmed that ungraded classes are not more than makeshifts. Unless the backward pupils of a larger district are brought together to form classes, each representing a grade, and these organized into a school, very much valuable time and effort must be wasted without really benefiting the pupils, not to speak of the excessive burden that is put on the teacher.

Years of experience and observation in special help classes in Germany have demonstrated the fact that the great majority of these children *need a reduced course of study* and special training in schools organized for their need. The late superintendent, Dr. Bertram of Berlin, who had been very reluctant in introducing this innovation, was forced to admit that very few pupils, properly assigned to a special help class, develop sufficiently to carry the work in the regular classes, and that their interests are best served

by promotion through the grades of the *Hilfsschule*. Nothing, of course, prevents a retransfer to the regular grade in favorable cases.

About 1 per cent of the pupils of German elementary schools are found in *Hilfsschulen*. Before being assigned to one of these, a pupil has been tested usually a year and a half in the regular first grade and is then transferred to the *Hilfsschule* upon the judgment of his teachers and the school physician. The records kept for each child by teachers and physicians are highly interesting and instructive. I am prepared to report specially on these records if required.

As many of the pupils have attended school nearly two years before entering the *Hilfsschule*, the organization of the latter comprises six grades. The classes, each containing but one section, are *very small*. In Charlottenburg the number of pupils assigned to a teacher and class is 12 in the lower grades, 14 in the middle grades, and 16 in the upper grades. In Berlin and other cities the numbers are very slightly higher, 14, 16, and 18 pupils per class respectively. It is this organization of primary classes of 12 to 14 pupils, *all being of one group or section*, that permits of a degree of individual attention and care by the teacher that is next to ideal.

One school of this kind that I visited was composed of nine classes. This small school had three shops, one for clay-modeling, one for pasteboard work, and one for woodwork. There was also a large exhibition room, a kind of museum, showing in genetic progression the work to be done along all the lines of activity in that school. A large *Lehrmittel* room was also provided which contained a rich supply of material for object lessons, so much needed with backward children. While manual training is optional for children of the elementary schools it is considered absolutely essential in the training of backward pupils. Singing, gymnastics, walks in the city, to parks, and to the woods form part of the program.

Stutterers and stammerers are instructed 2-4 hours a week by specialists.

To show the reduced and simplified course of these schools,

I insert the weekly time table of the *Hilfsschulen* at Berlin for comparison with that of the regular classes on p. 191.

## HILFSSCHULE—BERLIN

## HOURS PER WEEK

	Grade 6 (lowest)	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1 (highest)
Religion.....	3	3	3	3	3	3
Reading, writing, language, spelling....	5	5	5	5	6	6
Arithmetic.....	4	4	4	4	4	4
Object lessons.....	4	4	4	4	6	6
Manual training.....	4	4	4	4	4	4
Drawing.....	..	..	1	1	1	1
Singing.....	1	1	1	1	2	2
Gymnastics—games.....	1	1	2	2	2	2
	22	22	24	24	28	28

The large amount of time given to object lessons and manual training is worthy of attention. The elements of geography, history, and nature-study are taught as object lessons. The teachers present only what is most essential and practical and an especial effort is made in these schools to make the instruction vivid, real, and objective. Slow progress, repetitions, frequent reviews, presentation of the subject-matter from various viewpoints are of great value and of necessity with backward pupils. These processes cause even the duller pupils to comprehend things that would remain Greek to them during the more rapid and comprehensive instruction in the regular classes. The feeling of satisfaction and joy that comes to the backward pupils when they discover that they learn to know and to do things which were formerly dead to them acts as a stimulus to their interest in new matters and to their hopefulness of making further progress. But it is clear that the separation of these backward pupils is not only a very decided advantage to them but also to the regular classes. A considerable portion of the school time and a much greater portion of the teacher's nervous energy is saved by their removal, and time and energy may now be applied to a more evenly graded class, one that is more nearly capable of receiving instruction as a body; and therefore better mastery of the subject-matter and more rapid progress is insured.

*Hilfsschule* pupils who leave school at the age of fourteen or fifteen years have an opportunity, in fact they are obliged, to continue their school studies and their manual work a number of hours each week, in a continuation school especially organized for their needs.

#### SCHOOLS FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED

A study of the institutions for the training of children of low mentality is instructive from many points of view but particularly for the lessons in patience and skill exhibited by the teachers who make a specialty of this work. Some of these institutions are models of that type of schools that have full control of the child's education, regulating and guiding every step of his life for a number of years. One of the grandest examples of this class is the Landes-Erziehungs-Anstalt in Altendorf near Chemnitz.

Its location is very healthful and ideal, on gently sloping ground near the Crimmitschau forest, overlooking city and surrounding country. The city of Chemnitz agreed to preserve the forest in its present extent "forever" and grant admission to the woods to the members of the school at all times. The grounds belonging to the school cover an area of about 170 acres, about two-thirds of which is used for gardening and farming. A rectangle about 1,300 feet wide and 1,650 feet long contains the beautiful buildings which are surrounded by tastefully arranged gardens, ample playgrounds and fine gravel walks. Among the thirty-eight buildings which are constructed in the villa style, may be mentioned three schoolhouses, a chapel, a gymnasium, a central bathhouse, kitchen and dining-hall, several buildings containing shops, an administration building, dwelling-houses for the pupils and for the officers and teachers, a dairy, a central heating and lighting plant, and a hospital. No two of these buildings are alike, each presenting an architectural individuality of its own, and yet the whole complex impressing the observer with its harmony of conception. This school can accommodate only eight hundred pupils, but the cost of the buildings and their outfit amounted to about four and a half million marks, more than a million dollars.

Careful attention to modern hygienic requirements, the most scrupulous order, neatness, and cleanliness are apparent through-

out. Classrooms and living-rooms are made comfortable by a liberal supply of good furniture, and the cheerfulness of the occupants is promoted by pictures, decorations, songbirds, aquariums, and plants.

Each of the three school buildings has only nine classrooms, but in addition, each has two *Lehrmittel* rooms well supplied with material for object lessons. One of the classrooms in each school building is very large and is furnished with a grand piano for instruction in music.

The accompanying pictures show the exterior and interior of the hall for gymnastic exercises, which also serves as assembly hall on special occasions, and is provided with a stage.

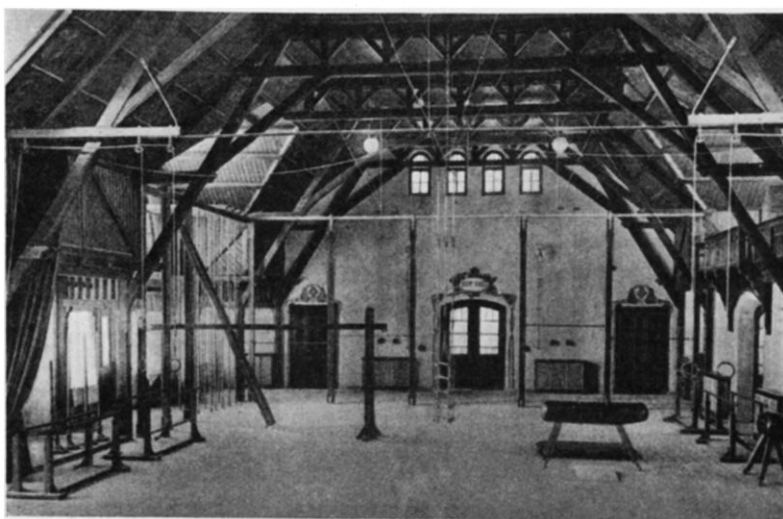
The teachers of Milwaukee and their friends have long been hoping for the establishment of a parental school. If ever this dream should be realized, a careful study of the plans, in all their details, of the Landes-Erziehungs-Anstalt near Chemnitz should not be neglected.

The methods of education and of instruction in these schools are based on the results of psychological research confirmed by long experience with mentally weak children. The fundamental principle is the stimulation to conscious and voluntary activity. Not the mechanical acquisition of a quantity of knowledge but the training to useful work is the main object of all educational processes in these institutions. The classes in school and the "families" out of school are *very small*, numbering *about twelve pupils*, and each is composed of pupils that are physically and mentally as nearly equal in grade as possible. This careful grading of classes is considered as absolutely fundamental for success. The development of the work through ten steps or grades and the numerous classes within this range, enable the teachers to place each child where he can do his best.

The four lowest grades comprise the *Vorschule*, the preparatory department, whose function is the training of the pupils' senses to observe properly the objects that surround them and to form concepts of these and of their qualities by numerous activities. A considerable portion of time is devoted to practical exercises in attending to themselves; learning to know the articles of dress,



GYMNASTIC HALL



INTERIOR OF GYMNASRIC HALL



their use, their material; utensils used in washing and bathing and the application of these. Regular use of the toothbrush is insisted upon. The pupils learn by frequent exercises to dress and undress and to aid each other in doing so, to clean their clothing and shoes, and to habituate themselves to orderliness in hanging or placing articles of dress and other objects, and in keeping their rooms in an orderly and neat condition. They have exercises in finding their way in the room and in the house, in the yard, on playgrounds, and in gardens, also to the places that have been visited on walks in the neighborhood. Polite behavior is also established by daily exercise.

A glance at the program for these lower four grades shows that only a small part of the time is devoted to regular school work, and during that time there is hardly a minute when the children are not "acting out" what is being taught. The lessons last 45 minutes and each is followed by 15 minutes' recess on the playground.

The distribution of work, in hours per week, is as follows for the *preparatory four grades or steps*:

	Grade I	Grade II	Grade III	Grade IV
Object lessons.....	6	6	6	5
Reading.....	..	..	..	4
Counting exercises.....	..	..	..	2
Singing.....	1	1	2	2
Gymnastics and play.....	4	3	3	3
Attending to themselves.....	6	6	4	4
Sorting of substances.....	..	2	2	1
Work with colored beads.....	3	3	..	..
Building.....	2	2	..	..
Folding and weaving.....	..	2	3	2
Placing colored sticks.....	..	..	2	2
Braiding.....	..	..	2	2
Claywork.....	..	..	1	1
Work with mosaic blocks.....	..	..	..	1
Total hours per week.....	22	25	25	29

The principal aim of this plan is to acquaint the pupils with objects, their qualities and properties; to train their perceptive faculty. Nothing is memorized but everything is learned by experience. In the *six grades of the school proper* the work, in hours per week, is distributed as follows:

	Grade VI (Lowest)	Grade V	Grade IV	Grade III	Grade II	Grade I (Highest)
Religion.....	..	4	4	4	4	4
Story telling.....	3	..	..	..	..	..
Reading, writing, language, spelling...	6	6	6	6	6	6
Arithmetic.....	3	3	3	3	3	3
Object lessons.....	4	3	3	3	1	1
Home geography.....	..	..	..	1	2	2
Singing.....	2	2	2	2	2	2
Drawing.....	1	1	1	1	2	2
Gymnastics and play.....	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Manual Training.....</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>
	31	31	32	33	34	36

In the higher grades, too, the development of manual skill is a prominent feature.

The processes by which it is attempted to reach the aim of this school, the training to conscious voluntary activity, are very interesting and instructive, and particularly so in the preparatory department where children of very low mentality are found, but these methods cannot be discussed in this report, as only a detailed and extended description would be of value, and that would form a special report.

Not a few of the weak-minded children who are found capable of training when first examined and observed, reach a point in their development where they come to an intellectual standstill and where they can no longer progress with their class in school or in the shops. To prevent retrogression, these children are instructed in school a short time every day and during the greater part of the day are trained to do some useful work within their capacity in so-called "work classes." One of these classes was composed of girls who had reached but the third grade of the preparatory department, two of boys who had reached but the second and fourth grades respectively of that department, while with others arrest of development occurred in one of the grades of the regular school.

Nowhere is demonstrated more clearly that with the best of teaching the progress of pupils must vary greatly in consequence of the natural endowment and of intercurring developmental conditions over which the educator has absolutely no control.

The institutions for feeble-minded children in Wittenau near Berlin and in Alsterdorf near Hamburg are organized and conducted, in theory and practice, essentially on the same principles; everywhere we find systematic efforts of promoting the physical conditions of the child and of arousing and stimulating his feeble mental powers by constant activity. The pupils are employed in a variety of occupations and are finally trained in one, so that they may become competent and possibly independent workers in some trade.

The literature concerning the education of weak and backward children is quite rich in Germany and the institutions mentioned above, as well as the *Hilfsschulen*, are liberally supplied with these books. A small school in Dresden of ten classes and 140 pupils is provided with a library of several hundred of such special works for the use of the teachers.

[To be continued]